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ABSTRACT

Middle-level education has become a fixture in our educational system. This collection of essays provides the opportunity for readers to examine current policies, programs, and practices in light of recent developments at the middle level. Nine essays include: (1) "Why Middle Schools?" (Donald Eichhorn); (2) "Organizing Middle Level Schools To Meet the Needs of Students and Staff" (Jody Capelluti); (3) "The Middle School Curriculum-Or Is It Curricula?" (John H. Lounsbury); (4) "Easing the Transition from the Middle Level to the High School" (Kathleen D. Rossi, Donald Stokes); (5) "Organizing and Grouping for Instruction" (Conrad F. Toepfer, Jr.); (6) "Guidance in the Middle Level School: The Compassion Component" (Sherrel Bergmann); (7) "Leadership at the Middle Level" (Ron Williamson); (8) "Middle Level Transition" (Larry Roth); and (9) "How Do You Know That It Works?" (J. Howard Johnston). George E. Melton provides an epilogue in which he describes the next decade as the "decade of the Curriculum at the Middle level," where colleges will provide preparation for middle level teaching and leadership. (101 references) (LAP)

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MIDDLE LEVEL EDUCATION

PROGRAMS, POLICIES, & PRACTICES

EDITED BY
JODY CAPELLUTI & DONALD STOKES

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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

Middle Level Education: Policies, Programs, and Practices

Edited by
Jody Capelluti and
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Preface

Middle level education is experiencing unparalleled growth as an organizational alternative. No longer referred to as a movement, it has become a fixture in our educational system. The lesson for educators and others, it would appear, is that educators have the knowledge and desire to implement change. If such change is to be successful, however, individual, group, and intergroup needs must be considered.

Meaningful teacher involvement in the process is a necessity. Only when schools are responsive to the needs of the educators who work in them will the education of our youth improve significantly.

Although there is considerable knowledge about the characteristics and interests of early adolescents, this information has not at all times been reflected in what and how we teach these students. These differences are, in fact, the foundation upon which the middle level school is based. It is this uniqueness that provides the rationale and justification for creating a middle level school as a distinct entity within a school system. However, for a system to be totally effective there must be an understanding of and articulation between all levels.

This monograph provides an opportunity for readers to examine current policies, programs, and practices in light of recent developments at the middle level. It is our desire that by studying the successes of our colleagues at the middle level, all levels will be improved.

Jody Capelluti
Donald Stokes

Why Middle Schools?

Late in the 1800s, considerable criticism was directed at the 8-4 grade organization that was the pattern of the day. Among the critics was Charles Eliot, president of Harvard University. In addresses before the National Education Association (NEA), Eliot expressed concern about the age and status of incoming freshmen (Brubacher, 1945). As a result, the NEA appointed a number of national committees to consider the direction of public education. These groups and their reports acted as catalysts for reform.

These committees did not recommend a separate middle level organization, but rather indicated that grades 7-9 should become a transitional phase of secondary education.

The initial impetus to reorganize came from Eliot, who was profoundly interested in the inordinate length of time it took to finish pre-university preparation programs. In addition he had conducted time studies demonstrating " . . . that a good high school graduate about eighteen years old could do in 15 hours all the examples of arithmetic which the grammar school child in the same year did in two years giving one-fifth of their school time to the subject" (Eliot, 1909).

Eliot's time concern, while instrumental in professional studies of the day, did not last. Douglass and Grieder (1956) pointed out in retrospect, "The early exponents of reorganization were profoundly convinced that at least two years could be saved between the first grade and college graduation. This idea was given up though and the ultimate outcome may be summed up as follows: 'Not the same education in less time, but better education in the same time'."

The Intervening Years

The junior high school was one of the most remarkable innovations in the history of education. In this noble experiment, the ninth grade was placed with the seventh and eighth grades. Ninth grade retained its high school status by necessity, as ninth grade students continued to earn Carnegie Units necessary for graduation. The seventh and eighth grades remained quasi-elementary, and school activities occurred mainly in the ninth grade and were patterned after the high school program.

There were internal forces that emphasized a need to meet the special physical, social, and emotional needs of youngsters in grades seven through nine. However, leaders of the reorganized school movement made it clear that it was a secondary school. Gruhn and Douglass (1956) stated: "Because the junior high school is considered a secondary school, its responsibility for instruction in the fundamentals is sometimes misunderstood."

By Donald H. Eichhorn

Junior high schools, like today's middle schools, felt the pressures from inside and outside forces over which they had little control. For example, the building of school plants became a priority. Gruhn and Douglass (1956) commented: "As in the 1920's, a tremendous increase is now taking place in elementary and secondary school enrollments. Community after community is engaged in an extensive school building program to meet this increase. Because of its position between the elementary school and the high school the junior high school frequently provides a ready solution to the pressure of increased enrollments."

There were a number of factors involved in the junior high school's entrance onto the educational scene. Lounsbury (1960) stated: "In some instances, even the champions of the junior high school movement came from different philosophical camps. College men advocated reorganization for the economy of time. Public school leaders were concerned over better meeting the immediate needs and saw the junior high schools as a means of doing this. Board of education members may have seen reorganization as an economy move, while teachers may have supported reorganization because it would bring about new and special facilities such as science laboratories."

The junior high school developed rapidly after the first one was established in 1910. Grades 7-9 seemed to be the preference for city systems, while 6-6 organizations were popular in rural areas. These newly reorganized schools grew in number and quality of program.

Middle level schools were guided by the concept of functions. These functions were summarized by Gruhn and Douglass in their definitive book, *The Modern Junior High School* (1956). The functions included integration, exploration, guidance, differentiation, socialization, and articulation. These elements clearly defined the needs of junior high school students and pointed to their importance in programs.

The middle level concept was well received by many school systems. Despite the junior high's growth, there was a persistent voice of criticism. Noar (1961), a junior high school educator and a supporter, stated, "The junior high schools originally founded to meet the need for education on a level intermediate between elementary school and high school have generally been accused of falling short of helping children for whom they are designed."

Bossing (1954) was even more candid when he said: "If the junior high school is to provide a better learning situation than exists today, then some far reaching improvements are necessary. At present, the junior high school is but a small imitation of the senior high school . . . ."

Nevertheless, the junior high school accomplished a great deal in establishing a transitional level between elementary and high schools.

The Middle School Years

In the late 1950s, with the launch of Sputnik I, education became a target of national concern. Citizens expressed disappointment with the schools for allowing Russia to take the lead in technology. This had a profound effect on middle level education.

Subjects were moved downward in grade level—i.e., algebra was moved from grade nine to grade eight; biology, chemistry, and physics were moved one grade lower. Foreign languages, usually offered in the high school, became part of middle level programs. Teaching strategies emphasized a "hands-on" approach.

There were other external forces that helped change the middle level organizational format. Racial tensions resulted in the so-called "white flight" to suburban enclaves. This

was seen as an opportunity to bring about racial harmony by integrating the races earlier. While this occurred in cities, the "white flight" to the suburbs caused increased home construction, and with it, the need for new schools. This provided the new middle school concept with a reason for change.

The disclosure by Tanner (1962), the noted English physician and medical researcher, that biological maturity was occurring earlier by four months per decade was also instrumental in the movement toward reorganization of middle level education.

Alexander and McEwin (1989) reported that the number of schools organized in a grade six through eight configuration grew from 1,663 schools in 1970-71 to 4,329 in 1986-87 (an increase of 160%) while the number of schools using the grade seven through nine configuration declined 53 percent from 4,711 schools in 1970-71 to only 2,191 in 1986-87.

Grade reorganization is, of course, less important than program development. And, at this time, it appears that program development is occurring at a slower pace than grade reorganization.

Middle schools have been innovative. Many of their programs have been designed to meet age and learner characteristics and, as such, have departed from the former traditional programs. For example, adviser-advisee systems have been initiated in place of the homeroom guidance programs of the past.

Research findings compiled by Johnston and Markle (1986), regarding the effectiveness of middle level education are mixed, however. From the data available, it seems that middle schools have not significantly outperformed other schools, although a slight gain in both the cognitive and affective areas is indicated.

A study conducted by Educational Research Service states, "There is little difference in academic achievement between middle and junior high school pupils but neither did grade organization have any detrimental effect on the achievement of middle grade students" (Calhoun, 1983).

Future Years

The future middle level school could have exciting and dynamic programs. A solid foundation is in place, and along with this firm base is a growing demand for competent instructional personnel, flexible organization, improved basic achievement, effective instructional strategies, and a revised curriculum.

There are, however, five significant challenges facing middle level schools in the last decade of this century. These challenges, listed below, must be met if the middle level program is to address the needs of students.

1. Solutions to Perplexing Problems

The middle level school must find solutions to its most perplexing problems. Included here are the continuing questions of student grouping, retention, and departmentalization. These barriers have been very difficult to overcome. Homogeneous grouping has been used and analyzed for many years, yet the preponderance of research findings has led to the conclusion that this approach is usually ineffective.

Why, then, continue to use this approach? Essentially, the reason is that instructional personnel continue to believe that it narrows the achievement range and thus facilitates a more effective program.

2. Grade Nine Placement

Ninth grade students have had difficulty with placement in the K-12 system. These

students have usually been placed either in a grade 7-9 junior high school or a 9-12 high school. Neither of these placements have been effective.

Too often students are victims of organization: In the 7-9 school, the program is overly academic due to the requirements of graduation. In a 9-12 placement, students are expected to make the leap from eighth grade to the maturity level of high school students. The ninth grade is a transitional level and should be treated as such in social and academic areas.

3. Effective Curriculum

An effort must be made to meet the curriculum needs of middle level students. There are compelling reasons for curriculum to be reviewed at this point. First, a sweeping analysis has not been done since the massive programs of the 1950-60 era; and second, recommendations are being made for curricular remedies that require professional scrutiny.

4. Professional Preparation and Certification

Middle level professional preparation and certification programs are inadequate. In addressing this challenge, we have an opportunity to create a program uniquely designed for the middle level.

This has not been the case in the past. It was generally felt that junior high school teachers were prepared for higher levels of academic content, with little consideration given to the physical, social, and emotional characteristics of their students. Likewise, middle school teachers have not been trained for their new role. In most instances, teachers and principals received only on the job training.

5. Instructional Programs

There must be a commitment by educators and members of the school community to design and implement compatible academic programs as well as programs to combat such current social problems as substance abuse and teenage pregnancy.

It is evident that the middle level organization needs to develop instructional models, based on age and learner characteristics, to test new program proposals and to evaluate present programs.

Some of our flawed practices remain. We are locked into past strategies and do not give adequate consideration to new approaches. We must seek innovative practices. Most of all, middle level educators must have the courage to create and implement effective programs.

For example, students might be grouped by developmental age. Some years ago, this writer (Eichhorn, 1973) worked with Dr. Alan Drash, chief of pediatrics at Children's Hospital in Pittsburgh, Pa., to develop a program that grouped students in combination with biological age, mental achievement, and social interests. Students were assigned to learning units based upon developmental age, and were grouped for instruction by their achievement on curriculum tests. In effect, grouping for each instructional unit was homogeneous, but only for the period of time used by the instructional unit.

This program was effective because developmental age grouping was in tune with age and learner characteristics. Further, it was designed with the help of physicians who had an innovative perception of education. This program remained effective, but ultimately tradition, the age-old nemesis of educational innovation, succeeded in altering its approach.

Conclusion

As we look ahead, we should do so in the manner expressed in *Turning Points* (Carnegie Council, 1989), which states:

"Finally, we call upon all those deeply concerned about young adolescents' future, and the future of the nation, to begin now to create the nationwide constituency required to give American young adolescents the preparation they need for life in the 21st century.

"The work of all these sectors will be necessary to transform middle grade education. Through their efforts, a community of learning can be created that engages those young adolescents for whom life already holds high promise and welcomes into the mainstream of society those who might otherwise be left behind."

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Organizing Middle Level Schools To Meet the Needs Of Students and Staff

Early adolescence is a unique, exciting, challenging time of life. It is a time when dramatic changes occur in appearance, self-concept, and intellectual development.

Early adolescence is also a critical period in human development. Some would argue that to call it a transition period, to think of it as something that one is only passing through, would be to reduce its importance.

The dramatic characteristics of adolescents place an extraordinary burden on the educational system to provide a structure that accommodates their developmental dissimilarities. Upon analysis, if we view the early adolescent as different from the elementary school child or the young adult at the high school, then we must, in fact, provide a framework that varies from what is provided at these levels.

What constitutes an effective middle level school? *An Agenda for Excellence at the Middle Level: A Statement by NASSP's Council on Middle Level Education* (1985) talks about the most successful middle level schools being client-oriented. In addition, it says, schools:

> . . . understand the relationship of development to learning so that students are not asked to violate the dictates of their development in order to participate fully in the educational program. Schools must ensure that everyone who works in them must understand how students of this age develop and how that development affects their behavior and learning.

The organization of the middle level school must reflect its purposes. *Schools in the Middle: Report of the Middle Level Task Force* (Maine Department of Educational and Cultural Services, 1988) points out that the mission of the school and what takes place in the school are more important than the physical plant and the grade level configuration:

> School organization and facilities should enhance the efficient operation of the academic program and maximize student and teacher input into the quality of the learning environment. The organization of the school should contribute to a sense of ownership and commitment on the part of the people who work and learn there.

By Jody Capelluti

As we look at the needs of the adolescent we must examine the changing role of the family and its impact on the organization of the school. There is no question that the family of today is dramatically different from the family of 30 years ago. The divorce rate hovers near 50 percent, and the average family contains just slightly more than two people. In 1960, there were four people per household. Fewer people in the home means fewer people to assist in the responsibilities of parenting, including such things as providing guidance, consistent discipline, and support for learning; helping youngsters get to school; and monitoring and assisting with their schoolwork. As a result, many of these responsibilities have been assumed by the school.

Early adolescents are searching for independence; they also still need the security of adult approval and direction. When this is lacking in the home, the school becomes the surrogate family. The teams or small learning communities in schools become the extended family for many youngsters. Thus, the school structure should provide a small group of students with the opportunity to be known well by at least one adult. Adult guidance to help youngsters deal with this difficult period is crucial.

The Carnegie Report, *Turning Points* (1989) recommends that schools for early adolescents be organized around:

> . . . small communities for learning where stable, close, mutually respectful relationships with adults and peers are considered fundamental for intellectual development and personal growth. The key elements of these communities are schools-within-schools or houses, students and teachers grouped together as teams, and small-group advisers that ensure that every student is known by at least one adult.

The report argues for smallness, with teams being ideally composed of 200-300 students, but in no situation ever more than 500. Smallness provides the potential for success. However, how one structures and utilizes the smallness—the team organization—becomes the cornerstone of the middle school.

The mandate is for schools to be organized in a manner that allows for the benefits that both small and large schools can provide. At present, in schools housing seventh and eighth graders, the average enrollment is 491; in 6-8 schools it is 577; and in 7-9 schools it is 733 (Epstein and Mac Iver, 1989).

Large schools can offer facilities, resources, and services to meet the needs of the emerging adolescent. More staff usually means the availability of unified arts personnel and more flexibility in scheduling students and programs. In this context, being bigger is a benefit. Within this largeness, however, is the danger of being lost, of not having a small, caring environment where students are known well by a few adults.

A bridge is needed between the self-contained elementary school and the traditional departmentalized high school. Hence, the proposal for small schools within large schools.

When the middle school is organized, what grades should be included? For years, educators and parents moving toward a middle level concept have searched for the best possible grade configuration.

Parents wonder how older students might influence their children. Would, in fact, an eighth grader negatively influence a fifth grader? Would observing eighth grade behavior force younger children to grow up too soon?

Educators think about whether the school would be too large, with too many grade levels contained in a single building. Would grade spans affect teaching practices? How would transition issues be handled from level to level? Would elementary and secondary teaching practices support the middle level philosophy?

Alexander and McEwin (1989) provide much meaningful information in *Schools in*

the Middle: Status and Progress. In this book, they report on the status of middle level education in 1968 and again in 1988. The data on grade level organization show a dramatic, 160 percent increase in the number of grade 6-8 schools, a 47 percent increase in grade 5-8 schools, a 53 percent decrease in 7-9 schools, and only a 7 percent increase in grade 7-8 schools.

Epstein and Mac Iver (1989) found that there are 30 different grade level configurations for schools that include grade 7. Those normally defined as being organized for early adolescents (6-8, 7-8, 7-9) enroll approximately 80 percent of all seventh graders. Of these schools, close to 40 percent attend grade 6-8 schools, 25 percent attend grade 7-8 schools, and 17 percent attend 7-9 schools.

Although size of school and grade level configuration are issues, what goes on in the school is more important. Programs and practices are key determinants of an effective middle school, not how many grades are included or its size.

Within the team unit, how should instruction be organized? Teams usually consist of two to five teachers, who teach the same students different subjects. In fact, on many teams, teachers have mastery in more than one subject and teach multiple-content areas. These teachers share the same students, planning period, and curriculum. Curriculum is delivered on a basis that allows students to experience integrated themes rather than separate subjects.

The rationale for interdisciplinary teaching teams is that they provide a manageable, philosophically defensible approach to delivering instruction and guidance to this age group. In theory, staff members can be more responsive to students because they know them more intimately and can teach them more effectively because of the small group size and common planning periods.

What is the current status of interdisciplinary teams? Epstein and Mac Iver (1989) found that in schools with grades 7-8, 32 percent utilize interdisciplinary teaming as an organizational strategy. However, only 10 percent of these schools provide a daily common planning period and/or support the team in using most of this time allocation for team planning activities. Only 36 percent give the team members two or more hours of common time each week to conduct team matters. However, by this year a 10 percent increase is projected in the number of schools that have interdisciplinary teams and a common planning period.

As schools designed to serve early adolescents begin their ninth decade, it is clear that the name on the building, be it a junior high, intermediate, or middle school, is not that important. Many schools that bear the name "junior high" are dedicated to providing appropriate programs for the early adolescent. Efforts should be focused on implementing practices that make for a successful middle level school rather than expending energy on symbolic issues that may hinder productive schooling. We must be careful not to confuse the school with the building.

The Middle Level School Is Not Just for Kids

Students aren't the only ones who benefit from the way middle level schools are organized. Adult needs are also being met.

The middle level approach emphasizes collaboration, respect for the knowledge base of the professional staff, equalization of power and responsibility in the school, and participation by all. Concepts such as teacher empowerment, school-based management, and restructuring are not new to the middle level school.

Middle level schools have been responsive to the notion that teachers are adult learners. One could argue that whatever success middle level schools have enjoyed is the result of their ability to acknowledge and respond to the needs of the staff.

The recognition of the adult learner translates into three beliefs about the people who work in schools. These convictions provide the foundations for adult organizational arrangements. They are:

1. People need a structure that allows for flexibility, creativity, and accountability.

The culture in an effective middle level school encourages staff members to take risks by utilizing their individual and collective talents. The school environment is receptive to change because middle schools are about change. Ongoing analysis provides data used to adjust and improve staff performances. Accountability is an integral part of the process for determining effectiveness of programs, products, and people.

2. Professionals need control over their destiny.

Teachers as well as students are recognized as being different and unique. Miller (1990) states that in order to change and improve schools it is necessary to acknowledge the diversity of teachers in terms of lifestyles, interests, and concerns.

She argues that "authentic staff development places the teacher at the center of the activity as an active participant, reflective learner, competent decision maker, and empowered professional."

Successful middle level schools are those in which personal and organizational goals are congruent; where adults have the ability to change what happens.

3. Working together rather than in isolation leads to greater productivity.

Opportunities to share information and insights allow teachers to develop a sense of interdependence that creates an intellectual catalyst for professional expansion and growth.

Research is beginning to yield some powerful evidence that the culture of a school changes significantly when experienced teachers stop functioning in isolation and start solving problems collectively. Collaborative efforts between teachers would enhance the overall effectiveness of the school: With additional leadership responsibilities, teachers can offer each other support and guidance, practice will become less isolated, and collegial relationships will be developed.

How do these beliefs transfer to practices and programs? *An Agenda for Excellence at the Middle Level* (Johnston et al., 1985), addresses the issue of school organization and teacher involvement. The report states that to achieve academic excellence, schools should be organized so that decisions are made by those who are required to implement them.

School-based management promotes the concept that decisions should be made at the level closest to the implementation of the decisions. Hence, schools within schools, houses, teams, or learning communities are organizational designs that support this belief.

A major concept of the school organization and operation is staff participation in the decision-making process. In successful middle level schools, staff members feel they have more at stake because of the trust placed in them by the administration. In such schools, staff members are involved in curriculum development, materials selection, the hiring of teachers and support personnel, decisions on staff development activities, setting and assessing goals for the school and themselves, as well as policies and procedures regarding daily working conditions. Teachers also have control over student

scheduling and grouping assignments.

Whether by default or by carefully designed choice, teachers at successful middle level schools work together. Although there is a sense of common purpose, there is also a respect for and a nurturing of diversity. It is the synergy of the adult relationships that stimulates the workplace.

Just as differences in early adolescents are recognized and encouraged, so are these same differences in adults valued. Adults are viewed as responsible individuals capable of determining appropriate choices for students. They are viewed as legitimate decision makers.

The Carnegie Report, *Turning Points* (1989), calls for empowering teachers and administrators. The power to make decisions and the responsibility for the leadership of the school must rest with those who work with the students daily. Simply stated, teachers and administrators must be trusted to do what is best for students.

Successful middle level schools endorse the concept that educators have the knowledge and desire to successfully implement change. Teachers must assume more control over the process necessary to remake the educational enterprise. Only when schools are responsive to the needs of educators who work in them will the education of early adolescents improve significantly.

Impact on the High School

The success of the team approach in the middle level school has placed pressures on high school administrators and their staff members. Students who have enjoyed success through a teaming arrangement that allows for control and guidance, along with their parents, have called for similar organizational structures at the next level. These demands, along with the failure in general of middle school teachers and administrators to implement a meaningful, systematic transition program to the high school have resulted in stress at both organizational levels.

The time may be right for collaboration, for looking at successes at the middle level and examining which practices may be appropriate for the high school.

I believe further investigation will demonstrate that whatever success middle level schools have achieved rests with their ability to provide for the unique needs of adolescents, and, equally important, with their ability to provide for the professional needs of those who work in them.

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The Middle School Curriculum–Or Is It Curricula?

A school's curriculum is usually viewed as the sum total of the planned learning experiences and activities provided by the school. It refers more to what is taught than how or why, although these factors cannot be fully separated. To understand adequately the entire curriculum issue at the middle level, some special aspects of curriculum planning for early adolescents and the inherent problems related thereto must be recognized.

The crux of the middle level curriculum problem can be stated quite succinctly: While the curriculum is essentially a common general education program, it is offered to students who are distinguished by the degree to which they differ from one another. Put differently, it could be said that at neither of the other levels—the elementary school or the high school—are the individual differences of pupils as great while the program is so similar.

In the elementary school, a variety of subgroups and individual work have been used within the self-contained classroom in order to recognize individual differences. In the high school, tracks and electives come into play as options that presumably accommodate differences in pupils. But in the junior high and middle school, different as pupils are, they all take essentially the same prepackaged program.

The facts about the individual differences of early adolescents, though frequently cited and well documented, simply have not been adequately recognized in making decisions about the content to be taught in the middle grades. The complete unanimity of pupils may be a utopian concept for teachers to contemplate in moments of despair. How easy it would be to teach; how simple to administer. But such a reverie is as far from reality as anything imaginable. In fact, it should be recognized that it is this diversity of pupils that is the fundamental justification for establishing a middle level school as a separate entity.

We group children together in an elementary school because, whether they are first graders or third graders, they are children, and as such are relatively homogeneous. We group adolescents together in the high school because, whether they are tenth graders or twelfth graders, they are adolescents.

By John H. Lounsbury

The justification for the middle level institution, however, is different. What youngsters at this developmental level have in common is their lack of commonality. Men, women, and children occupy the same classroom. They are all in transition between childhood and adolescence, but they go through this transition at greatly varying times and rates.

Girls, of course, on the average mature a year or two ahead of boys; but some boys reach puberty before some girls. And some girls move through the stages of puberty in 18 months while others take several years to complete the same maturation process. This tremendous physical diversity is matched by comparable diversity in the social, emotional, and intellectual development of early adolescents.

Can a single required curriculum fit such diverse young beings? This is a question not yet answered adequately, and not likely to ever be answered affirmatively.

Curriculums are planned for groups on assumptions about the commonality of the needs and interests of each group. Textbooks are written to match the scope and sequence —or vice versa. Student participation in planning the curriculum has never been a popular notion among middle level schools, or in fact, almost anywhere in formal education. The result is the perpetuation of the canned curriculum of traditional content, not all that different from what was advocated for the secondary schools in the early 1900s.

It is inevitable that systemwide curriculum planning and the materials necessary to support it can never be fully effective. Such plans are based on generalizations and assumptions. Yet, when those plans become programs and are applied arbitrarily to a particular group of diverse early adolescents unknown to those who made the decisions, some clear violation of individual needs and interests must result.

In large public school systems curriculum decisions have to be made apart from knowledge of specific pupils. Although it is hoped that teachers, familiar with their pupils, can adapt those general programs, experience has shown they are usually unable or unwilling to do so. Support from upper level administrators for teachers taking liberties with the approved scope and sequence has rarely been present.

Individual pupils, however, not beholden to the dictates of administrators, ultimately make individual and personal decisions about "their curriculum." Teachers err by continuing to assume falsely that they "teach" a class and then planning their lessons accordingly. Yet, it is obvious that one really cannot teach a class at all, for a class has no mind; it is simply an administratively established grouping of individuals, each of whom learns as an individual.

And what the individual early adolescents learn is quite varied. They do not all learn what the teacher teaches. Some learn one thing, some another.

There is, in fact, not "a" curriculum, but there are as many curricula as there are individual pupils in a class. The individual's curriculum is made up of those learnings that he or she selects, accepts, and incorporates into himself or herself. Educators and parents would be surprised to see the degree to which the real curriculum of individuals differs from one student to another, although they sit side by side and receive the same instruction.

The disparity between what is learned from common experiences is a source of frustration for middle level teachers who would like to hold common standards and expectations for all pupils. From the very moment a teacher starts teaching something to a class, that teacher should recognize that some pupils in the class already know more about what is to be presented than some other pupils will know after several days of teaching it. Planning appropriate learning experiences for early adolescents is a complex and difficult task.

The Origins of the Junior High/Middle School Curriculum

In the early days of the junior high school movement (1910-40), the newly acquired "secondary" grades—seventh and eighth—were typically converted from self-contained classrooms to departmentalized situations. Here, the content, methods, and organizational approaches of the high school quickly made the junior high school what its unfortunately selected name implied it to be, a *junior high school*. For the next several decades, and to the present, the completely departmentalized program prevailed in America's junior high schools.

Although alternate proposals were advanced, and some success with them occurred during the 1930s, '40s, and '50s (the progressive education era), the nearly universal practice in junior high schools has been a curriculum of separate subjects presented by specialists in those subjects during a day composed of separate and usually equal periods. The middle school curriculum, for all practical purposes, came intact from the junior high school.

Alexander (1968), in the first comprehensive survey of the new middle schools, noted the lack of change and concluded:

> Aims generally stated, both in the literature and by the respondents for the schools in the sample, such as "to remedy the weaknesses of the junior high school" and "to provide a program specifically designed for this age group" are not generally reflected in the curriculum plan and instructional organization of the schools surveyed. The program of studies is generally comparable to that of these grades in predecessor organizations.

The limited change in the basic curriculum of the middle school is somewhat surprising when it is recognized that dissatisfaction with the junior high school as it had become in practice—mimicking the high school in nearly every way—was the major force in launching the middle school.

The middle school was put forth as a better way to provide educational experiences for early adolescents. However, in terms of curriculum—the content itself—relatively little has been done. In fact, the very problems with the junior high school often were compounded by the middle school as it took over the sixth grade and proceeded to departmentalize it, treating it much like another secondary grade. Many, if not most, early middle schools were really junior, junior high schools. Some still are.

The Components of the Middle School Curriculum

The middle school curriculum, though usually spoken of in the singular, has really not been a single entity. Rather, it has been a compilation of separate curricula or components. The basic program, the so-called academics, is composed of required courses in language arts and reading, social studies, science, and mathematics. These may be provided in sections grouped according to ability or in heterogeneous sections. Where the number of students is sufficient to make it possible, some ability grouping—particularly in mathematics and reading—is usually practiced.

The second curriculum component is the exploratory program. This component more nearly matches the nature of the age group than any other. Most frequently it includes art, music, home economics, and industrial arts, provided in a required cycle. The exploratory component, however, varies greatly school to school, affected both by the grade organization and the size of the school.

Middle schools generally have increased the attention to exploration, bringing in a variety of short-term courses in areas such as computers, drama and speech, health and sex education, general business, and others. Foreign language is also often included in the exploratory program. Enrichment, interest-centered mini-courses sometimes supplement the required exploratory program in middle schools. Electives in the exploratory areas are common at the eighth grade level.

Considerable detail on the nature and extent of exploratory courses provided in middle level schools is found in *Schools in the Middle: Status and Progress* (Alexander and McEwin, 1989), and *Education in the Middle Grades: Overview of National Practices and Trends* (Epstein and Mac Iver, 1990).

Physical education is treated as a separate program that requires special facilities. It is typically provided in classes composed of students in one grade level. Separate physical education classes for boys and girls, common for many decades, have given way to coeducational classes.

An intramural and/or interscholastic program may or may not exist as a supplement to the regular physical education program. The appropriateness of interscholastic athletics for middle level students is a continuing issue. Generally, middle school educators oppose interschool athletic contests, but the public supports them and the practice prevails.

Student activities and clubs are generally viewed as part of the total curriculum. Here students can play a major role in the conduct of the activities, a condition unfortunately not prevalent in the academic classes.

The guidance program is recognized as an important element in a middle school. Group and preventive guidance is provided along with the individual counseling of students with difficulties or concerns. Middle schools have made considerable progress in instituting teacher-based guidance programs. Called adviser/advisee, teacher advisory, or home base, such programs provide a smaller-than-class-size group of students with an adviser who meets with the group on a regular basis to deal with the personal-social concerns of early adolescents as well as other topics of importance that do not fit in regular courses. Though difficult to institute and maintain, these programs meet a known need of early adolescents and have become a characteristic of real middle schools.

National shadow studies conducted of the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades have documented the perpetuation in the middle grades of the traditional curriculum composed primarily of the big four subject areas, usually supplemented by a period of physical education and a period for exploratory courses or electives (Lounsbury, Marani, and Compton, 1980; Lounsbury and Johnston, 1988; and Lounsbury and Clark, 1990).

The 1988 national survey conducted by Alexander and McEwin (1989), which was partially a replication of Alexander's 1968 study, showed that the traditional big four of language arts, social studies, science, and mathematics were almost universal year-long required parts of the curriculum in 1988, as they were in 1968.

The comprehensive 1988 study of schools with a seventh grade conducted by the Johns Hopkins Center for Research on Elementary and Middle Schools (Epstein and Mac Iver, 1990) confirmed the same generalizations about the courses offered. The authors report:

> Most middle grades students in all grade organizations take mainly basic or core courses and one or two other subjects. This is the result of widespread use of a six period day which limits course periods and flexible scheduling. It is also the result of a general conservative emphasis on basic skills, and a lack of attention to creating opportunities that are more responsive to the characteristics of early adolescents.

Epstein and Mac Iver (1990) also analyzed the effects of different grade organizations on the curriculum. They concluded that 6-8 middle schools "offer more students reading, computers, and other exploratory electives or mini-courses than do most other grade organizations. Junior high (7-9) schools offer more algebra, foreign language, industrial arts, and home economics than other grade organizations."

In expressing an opinion on the above and related findings, Epstein and Mac Iver concluded: "The program in middle schools looks more innovative, diverse, and responsive to early adolescents than programs in other grade spans. Junior high programs look more like traditional, subject-centered high schools than other grade organizations."

They further presented an issue that needs to be resolved when considering the best offerings for middle level schools:

> When schools provide seventh and eighth graders with opportunities for advanced courses, they may be increasing the level of challenge and high content overall, or they may be hurrying students into highly competitive situations before they are ready for higher level learning or before they have a strong base of skills on which to build. When schools provide more basic skills and fewer opportunities for advanced classes, they may be strengthening the skills of students, especially those who need help, or they may be delaying experiences that would help students see school as a stimulating and challenging place for learning.

Organizing the Curriculum for Instruction

Most of the attention given to middle school curriculum has been directed toward ways to organize the traditional curriculum: How can the subjects be presented most effectively? The notion of periods, courses, and subjects are so ingrained in educational thinking that they become foundational assumptions and are rarely questioned. It is not, "Shall we have periods?" but rather, "Shall we have six, seven, or eight periods?"

The concept of interdisciplinary teaming has emerged as the major distinguishing characteristic of middle schools. It calls for a team of teachers, most frequently one from each of the big four subjects, to teach a common group of students. These teachers, through their common planning time, can presumably come to better understand the students they share and correlate their instructional efforts to improve student learning. It is almost universally viewed as "the way to go" among middle level educators. Most middle level schools that are not practicing it view it as a goal. Unfortunately, it is still a minority practice, even in its basic organizational form. And, the reality is that in far too many interdisciplinary teams, departmentalized teaching continues.

The Implicit Curriculum

In addition to changing the explicit curriculum, middle level educators must also consider some changes in the implicit curriculum. Virtually ignored to date have been the many lessons youngsters learn through observation—lessons demonstrated by school programs and policies.

Schools that practice ability grouping, for instance, must recognize that in such schools youngsters learn that some kids are worth more than others. Well-developed discipline codes, with their lists of offenses and related punishments, teach kids that adults don't trust them, a lesson not intentionally presented but inevitably learned, nevertheless. Grading and testing programs, carried to extremes as they usually are, give a distorted view of what is really important. They teach kids that what really matters is

how well you do on paper-and-pencil tests.

Many lessons taught by the implicit curriculum, however, are good lessons. The attitudes of faculty members toward one another and toward kids are prime lessons that are learned by a sort of spiritual osmosis. Fortunately, in most middle level schools, these are positive lessons, for it is in the attitudinal or affective realm that these schools have made the most progress. In comparing the eighth grade shadow study results (Lounsbury and Clark, 1990) with previous shadow studies, the authors concluded:

> We believe the shadow studies make clear the reality that middle level education has been undergoing revision over the last three decades and changes for the better can be noted. These changes are not as universal or widespread as one might hope but they are evident . . . .
>
> Progress in climate is more apparent than progress in curriculum. Positive attitudes toward students, genuine concern for them and their developmental needs is evident, but the curriculum of content remains largely unchanged, even in many teamed situations. Schools have instituted recognition programs, developed fun activities like a dress-up day, organized interdisciplinary teams, established special classes or arrangements for students with unusual needs—all to the good—but the curriculum of content, the bread and butter of the school program, still is not reflective of what is known about the nature and needs of early adolescents.

Future Directions in Curriculum

Many of the curriculum concerns currently under discussion may gradually be rendered moot as middle level educators accept the challenge presented by James Beane in *A Middle School Curriculum: From Rhetoric to Reality* (1990). In this significant treatise, Beane points out the movement's hesitancy to deal with the content of the curriculum, accepting with little question the perpetuation of the prevailing separate subject, separate program approach. He delineates the weakness of this approach in light of the developmental needs of early adolescents and the needs of contemporary society. He then proposes a truly unified general education curriculum built around students' personal concerns and social issues.

This author believes Beane's position is sound and perhaps prophetic. To meet the needs of today's early adolescents, the traditional curriculum—no matter how it may be adjusted—is simply not adequate. Middle level education's future success will depend largely on whether it is willing and able to carry out the rather revolutionary changes that are needed to alter yesterday's program to make it appropriate for tomorrow's adults.

The last decade of this century, I believe, will see a shift of attention away from organizational issues and toward curriculum issues in middle level education. The battle to organize separate, distinctive middle level schools has been won, although mopping-up operations will continue for years. But the battle to provide a truly effective curriculum that is developmentally appropriate is just beginning.

And, as Beane predicts, it will be a far more difficult and perilous journey, but one on which the middle level movement must embark if it is to truly reform early adolescent education.

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Easing the Transition from The Middle Level to the High School

I'm afraid I'll get lost." "Will I fit in?" "What if they make fun of me?" "I'm worried they'll be bigger than I am." "I might fail." "I'm scared. I'd rather stay here."

Do these questions and statements sound as though they might be coming from someone who is insecure, unsure; someone who might be in need of help, understanding, guidance, and reassurance? Clearly, the answer is "yes."

These and similar statements are typical of many young people who sit in front of us daily—they are the youngsters who are about to make the transition from middle level schools to the high school.

Student Survey Results

In informal surveys, middle level students preparing to enter high school were asked to share with us their thoughts about this major step in their educational career. Consistent in their responses were themes of fear, anxiety, self-doubt, excitement, anticipation, confusion, and wonder. These same concerns and questions were expressed several years earlier, as they left elementary school for the middle level school. However, the students are older now, and too often, their pseudo-sophisticated ways and their mature physical appearance camouflage for us the fact that underneath the "grown-up" exterior is a heart, mind, and soul painted with self-doubt, concern, and need for success and acceptance.

As these students enter our high schools, one of their strongest needs is for a staff that understands and likes them; a staff armed with skills that will help make the transition to high school one marked with a high degree of success. This will require a clear understanding of the characteristics of the 14 to 15-year-old.

Physical Characteristics

The physical characteristics of these adolescents are dominated by change. We note

By Kathleen D. Rossi, Donald A. Stokes

changes in growth, with rapid increases in weight, strength, muscle mass, and height. At this age, boys undergo changes in voice tone, and facial hair begins to appear. Skin tones are changing—the oily skin may host the onset of teenaged acne. Sexual maturation also is occurring.

Social Characteristics

The social characteristics displayed by the rising middle level student are often the result of and occur in conjunction with the physical changes. Students of this age generally appear to have boundless energy, and often seem to be unable to sit still for very long. On the other hand, their rapidly changing bodies can cause them to tire easily.

Their new physical appearance can make the students feel embarrassed and unsure of themselves. They constantly worry about how they look. Student lockers often contain mirrors, combs, brushes, hair spray, mousse, breath spray, and assorted fragrances, and primping is a regular activity. The adage, "Beauty is only skin deep," is neither easily understood nor heeded by the 14 to 15-year-old group!

The need to be accepted by their peers is another social characteristic of these youngsters. High school usually becomes a mixing bowl, collecting students from several middle or junior high schools in a district. New peer groups are established; some are widened and some are narrowed, but all members share the basic need to belong.

Peer pressure continues for these students. Values are being tested constantly. These youngsters are lured or dared to experiment with alcohol, drugs, smoking, and sex, and they often act on impulse, leaving their common sense and values on the sidelines. Those who refuse to experiment may face another kind of fear—losing those they consider friends, or worse yet, of being ostracized for not joining in the experimentation.

Students of this age will often take offense at what they think other students may be saying about them, especially if the alleged comments threaten their reputation. They are quick to react, often physically, to a remark passed on to them by a second or third party. In addition to reacting with slaps, kicks, or punches, verbal comments punctuated with vicious threats and sometimes obscene language, and the subsequent holding of grudges are all characteristic of our rising middle level students as they deal with a variety of conflicts.

If one were to observe these students, one would see other social characteristics. Generally, one would see students striving to be alike—in the manner in which they dress, style their hair, talk, and respond to the latest fads. Some students at this age dare to be different in these things, and either spend much time alone or seeking out others with equally diverse tastes.

Range of Emotions

A range of emotions exists in rising middle level students. Mood swings are prevalent, and appear in tandem with the exhibition of adult-like behaviors one moment and childish behaviors the next. Bravado masks the fear and self-doubt these students are feeling as they venture into the more "grown-up" world of high school. Students will seem bored one minute, and then act exhilarated and challenged minutes later. Double meanings are commonplace in their conversation, and a real sense of humor is starting to emerge. Yet, they are often naive and one-sided in their arguments.

They are prone to exaggerate, and they feel that their experiences are common only to

them. The search for acceptance and independence continues to affect the way they perform in school.

The poem, "Who Am I?" written by one of our former students, applies here:

Who Am I?
I have many things I want to say, but . . .
No one listens
I have many things I want to do, but . . .
No one lets me.
I have many places I want to go, but . . .
No one takes me.
And the things I write are corrected, but . . .
No one reads them.
Who am I?

Needs of the Students

High school teachers must remember that entering students came from settings that were smaller; many may have been organized on the school-within-a-school concept. Students may have been grouped both heterogeneously and homogeneously and taught by a team of four or five teachers, often in an interdisciplinary fashion. Coming from such an environment to a traditional high school will require a major adjustment.

Students will need to be actively engaged in learning. They will need to be encouraged to think, and to make logical decisions and discoveries on their own and with the help and cooperation of classmates. They will need a wide range of class activities to hold their still widening attention spans. These students will need classes where they can compete against themselves as well as others. These youngsters will be faced with new freedoms when they enter high school; their sense of responsibility must be reinforced regularly in order to handle these freedoms.

Rising middle level students need to be accepted for who they are. Their self-esteem can be low and egos fragile during adolescence. Consistent praise and recognition for trying go a long way with these students. These students, so different yet so much alike physically and socially at this age, need help dealing with and accepting diversity in others. Their tolerance for different people (and ideas) must be strengthened.

Some Suggestions for Teachers

Teachers of the adolescents who are beginning their high school education might want to consider the following suggestions. They are simple, workable, sensible, and proven successful.

- Teachers must know and understand the physical, social, and emotional characteristics of their students. When they do this, they will be better equipped to know what (in addition to or instead of the subject matter) is on the students' minds that may be causing distractions.
- Teachers should expect to be tested by these adolescents. They should deal with such behavior in a low-key, forthright, and consistently fair manner. Teachers who don't get flustered, angry, or rattled send a clear message of confidence to the testers.

- Teachers must expect to be questioned, and even challenged, on their knowledge. Again, the direct, non-defensive, honest response to students works.
- Teachers who expect consistently adult, no-nonsense behavior from these students will be disappointed. Rising middle level students do not immediately adapt to all our high expectations.
- Administering a learning styles inventory will provide teachers with information on the kinds of classes and learning activities their new students will need to be successful.
- Frequent and appropriate use of praise and recognition helps young adolescents stay motivated. They may be high schoolers, but they still like to be rewarded by their teachers for doing something well.
- Teachers who model respect, care, concern, and consideration as well as a genuine liking for their students are most apt to enjoy reciprocal behavior on the part of their students.
- Teachers must recognize that rising middle level students have a strong need for discipline and direction.

Characteristics of Successful Teachers

Well-trained, skilled staff members who have the desire to teach beginning high school students are very much needed, and their success with these students is characterized by the ability to:

- Recognize that a well-articulated program helps to provide a smooth transition from the middle level to the high school
- Recognize that there is a vast difference between rising middle level students and those students who are ready to graduate, and accommodate for these differences in the expectations they hold for these students
- Recognize the necessity for maintaining close communication with parents
- Recognize that 14 to 15-year-olds are extremely sensitive regarding their own needs for socialization, and provide means for students to express themselves appropriately
- Provide opportunities for students to participate in a wide variety of school-related experiences
- Recognize that today, at an earlier age and in greater numbers than ever before, young adolescents are leaving their families to live on their own, and that young adolescents are faced with more moral, social, and ethical dilemmas than ever before
- Value these students regardless of their cultural, racial, or socioeconomic background and status, and believe that all students can and will learn.

Conclusion

Paving the road for the adolescent's journey through high school is a task filled with ups and downs. It is a task that challenges every fiber of the successful teacher.

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Organizing and Grouping for Instruction

Diversity remains the hallmark of development during the middle school years. The ranges of physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development demonstrated by youngsters during their middle level school years are wider than those in either elementary or high schools.

Young children have relatively similar physical, social, emotional, and intellectual characteristics when they enter elementary school. Their diversity becomes widest between grades 5 and 9, and their differences begin to decrease as they mature toward young adulthood in the high school. During their high school years, students approach their physical, social, emotional, and intellectual potential.

Integrating Learning

During the high school years, students demonstrate increasing abilities to integrate information learned in separate settings. On the other hand, the majority of young adolescents in middle level schools cannot readily make those connections independently. Middle level schools must develop procedures that help students make those connections.

Interdisciplinary teaching offers middle level schools . . . promising means for integrating learning among content areas. Attention should be given to the following in developing effective middle level interdisciplinary working groups:

- Make certain that concerns to integrate learning are present in all areas in the middle level school program.
- Identify opportunities to integrate learning within each subject area.
- Identify appropriate approaches for integrating learning among subject areas.
- Develop teaching strategies particularly suited for integrating learning among subject areas.
- Identify how extra-class activities can be related to interdisciplinary program activities.

By Conrad F. Toepfer, Jr.

Young and maturing adolescents learn best when they can see the importance of the facts, skills, and information from classroom lessons in their lives. Successful middle school teachers relate the information they teach to that taught in other areas. They also communicate its importance to issues facing students now and in the future.

Articulation Concerns

Middle level schools should identify learner abilities and move individual students ahead as best they can. Learning activities should help students develop a broad knowledge base and the skills necessary for later learning. The goal is to help youngsters "learn how to learn" and facilitate their becoming independent and confident students. In high school they can then build upon the foundations established during their middle level school experience.

In like manner, high school programs must start from what students have been able to develop and master in their middle level years. We must accept the reality of differentiation in rates of growth and maturation among early adolescents. All students cannot be expected to be "ready" to learn as mature adolescents upon their entrance into the high school. A wide range of instructional alternatives are required for entering students. Articulation of programs from middle level to high school requires cooperative planning between staff members from both levels.

Johnston et al. (1985) recommend establishing transition panels to define and deal with program articulation between both the elementary to the middle level and the middle level to the high school: A representative group of teachers from the terminal middle level grade and the entry high school grade should work with principals and parents.

Program articulation requires dialog and planning among teachers. During their final middle level school year, some students become bored with the school's organizational features. Their precocity means they usually adjust well in their first high school year. However, other students the same age will not be as socially or emotionally advanced.

Therefore, there cannot be a singular expectation of all entering high school students. One or two teams of high school teachers might teach ninth grade courses in more of a "middle level manner." This would help the less advanced students catch on and progress as they mature during the year. As that occurs, their teachers can move them toward procedures they will find in their next high school grade. This transitional option facilitates better adjustment for entering students who are not ready to completely shift to high school procedures. And, success in their entry year prepares students to meet the demands of their remaining high school years.

Education must always be rooted to some degree in preparing learners for the demands of the next level in school and in life. However, students also need help with "here-and-now" problems. Young adolescents particularly need to deal successfully with such issues.

Instructional Organization Concerns

Krug (1950) stated that to be effective, curriculum planning and school program development must be a "continuous, cooperative, comprehensive process dealing with concrete issues." As local middle level and high school program issues are defined, staff development/inservice activities that provide skills to implement those programs must be

addressed, and must be provided with the necessary time and resources.

Departmentally organized instruction does not articulate learning experiences among content areas. Instead, it separates learning within content areas. On the other hand, teaming can integrate learning among areas and reduce departmentally isolated learning.

Furthermore, departmentalization does not allow for the cooperative planning needed to achieve integration of learning. Research (Feldlaufer, Midgley, and Eccles, 1987) has shown departmentalization to be the least desirable means for grouping and organizing instruction in middle level schools. Interdisciplinary teaching and learning requires that teachers have regular opportunities to plan and develop the instructional program in multi-discipline enclaves. Teaming also provides organization that facilitates student transition and adjustment from the middle level to the high school (Toepfer, 1988).

For instructional reasons, middle level schools should be "teaming schools." Teaming should not necessarily be construed as team teaching. The teaming of teachers to plan and develop programs for those whom they commonly teach should be the initial concern.

A leadership strategy involving administrators and teachers is a common ingredient in schools with effective teaming approaches. Shared decision making between administrators and staff members was a hallmark of such effective schools before the current focus on teacher empowerment. Kron (1988a; 1988b) discusses how staff members and administrators have successfully developed shared instructional leadership approaches.

For reasons discussed previously, teaming for some students merits consideration in the high school entry year program. It warrants further consideration if the high school has concerns about integrating learning or about interdisciplinary teaching and learning.

Another procedure can articulate learning through vertical as well as horizontal program organization. It can be used with individuals or groups of teachers. However, this requires the teachers staying with classes over a two-year, 80-week cycle (Toepfer, 1982). Following the two-year cycle, students move on to the next grade level while teachers move back a grade to pick up new students to begin the two-year cycle again. Research strongly recommends extending the student-teacher relationship beyond one year (George, Spreul, and Moorefield, 1987).

Grouping Issues

Homogeneous ability grouping has been driven by the belief that learning is increased in classes where teachers can focus on a common ability level. This belief has not been supported by practice. The challenge is to move away from set patterns that lock students into fixed homogeneous arrangements for the semester or the school year.

George (1988) noted, "tracking does not deliver consistently favorable results for any group of students," and, "the effects of tracking on individuals, or classroom groups, affectively is often powerfully negative."

In reviewing a select sample of 154 of what were reputedly some of the nation's best middle level schools, George concluded, "virtually all of the outstanding middle schools surveyed placed students in heterogeneously grouped interdisciplinary teams."

Johnston and Markle (1986) reported the following in their review of research on grouping in middle level schools:

> The practice of grouping students by ability for instructional purposes is not supported by research. Even though a majority of teachers believes that ability grouping improves the effectiveness of schooling, the studies reviewed suggest that the practice has deleterious effects on teacher expectations and instructional practices (especially for students in lower ability

groups), student perceptions of self and others, and academic performance of lower ability students.

> Ability grouping interferes with opportunities for students to learn from—and learn to accept—peers of different socioeconomic backgrounds, and may perpetuate notions of superior and inferior classes of citizens. The practice is especially antithetical to the goals and objectives of the middle school.

Democratic society requires that people be able to function in the least restrictive environments possible. More heterogeneous grouping provides opportunities to learn in widening developmental ranges. This is more natural and lifelike than limiting learning opportunities within homogeneously grouped frames.

Slavin (1989/90) concluded that, "at the middle school level there is still no known benefit to ability grouping."

The Carnegie Report (1989) clearly endorses the need to move away from tracking and homogeneous grouping by ability:

> Tracking has proven to be one of the most divisive and damaging school practices in existence. Time and time again, young people placed in lower academic tracks or classes, often during the middle grades are locked into dull, repetitive instructional programs leading at best to minimum competencies. The physic numbing these youth experience from a "dumbed-down" curriculum contrasts sharply with the exciting opportunities for learning and critical thinking that students placed in higher tracks or classes may experience.

The continuing use of homogeneous grouping by ability in high schools also should be questioned. There appears to be no pedagogic reason for its dominance in organizing high school instruction. In fact, high schools that have successfully introduced cooperative learning have moved to more heterogeneous grouping bases.

That bears out David Hornbeck's comment regarding a replacement for tracking (NASSP, 1989). Hornbeck responded to the question, "How about tracking? What would schools replace it with?" as follows:

> One of the generically best strategies is what has come to be called cooperative learning. There are various versions of that but it basically revolves around high achieving youngsters helping those youngsters who are not achieving as well. One of the most popular forms of it is peer tutoring. An essential component to any effort to eliminate tracking depends upon staff development activities where teachers learn how to use alternative strategies.

Cooperative Learning

Both principals and teachers need extensive education in the area of cooperative learning and heterogeneous grouping arrangements to develop the skills needed to implement those approaches (Toepfer, 1990).

Cooperative learning approaches in more heterogeneously grouped classes allow students across the ability spectrum to learn better. However, this cannot be accomplished unless teachers develop and understand the skills needed to deliver such programs. This also requires that middle level principals gain the training necessary to implement cooperative learning programs and supervise teachers working in that modality.

Properly implemented, cooperative learning fosters constructive peer learning in a safer psychological environment than in the class at large. Competition is replaced by collaboration in smaller settings within the class to provide opportunities for mastering

particular activities and materials. Cooperative learning activities can develop positive interdependence as students work together and become responsible for individual growth and for one another.

Research recommends against homogeneous grouping by ability and confirms that more heterogeneous grouping practices facilitate effective school practice (Slavin, 1986a). Yet, advocates of homogeneous grouping by ability often have no qualms about disagreeing, although they lack substantive evidence of their claims. Educators, school board members, and enlightened laypersons should insist that such advocates present a legitimate data base before deliberating this issue.

Conclusion

Both middle level and high schools must develop programs that provide appropriately high expectations as well as options for successful learning (Toepfer, et al., 1989). Instead of trying to force the masses of young and maturing adolescents to higher level thinking, ready or not, schools should help each student become the best thinker she or he can be at the rate and pace that his or her capacities and developmental readiness will allow. Such an approach will help ensure a better attitude toward learning and prepare each youngster for long-term learning beyond the middle level and high school years.

Middle level schools must deliver students to the high school who have realistic chances for continued success in learning. School districts must dismiss the argument that *entering* students must be ready for high school. High schools must develop program options that accommodate the differing levels and learning rates of entering students.

Middle level schools must address the special educational needs of young adolescents. They must also serve as the link between the elementary and the high school program identities (Toepfer, 1986). Total educational effectiveness is served when elementary, middle level, and high school programs bridge together.

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Guidance in the Middle Level School: The Compassion Component

While shadowing a middle school counselor for one morning, the following activities were observed: four one-on-one conferences with troubled early adolescents; two parent conferences regarding students who were returning after extended illnesses; a meeting with the sixth grade team on an at-risk student; 11 phone calls from parents and county agencies; a brief meeting with the principal about the advisory topic for the next week; miscellaneous instant counseling for students passing in the hall; and the teaching of one seventh grade class on substance abuse.

In addition, this counselor made appointments to attend the afternoon seventh grade team meeting and finished designing a student survey on the effectiveness of the recently completed mini-course program. Finally, she took time to respond to my questions and comfort another teacher who was having a terrible day. (She later taught the teacher's class so the teacher could rest in the nurse's office.)

This counselor was living the compassion component of the middle level school. Teachers in this same school were asked how the social-emotional needs of their students were met. All of them answered that the counselor tried to meet those needs. None of the teachers perceived that they might be able to assist in this process.

Unfortunately, many of the social and emotional needs of the early adolescent go unmet as schools attempt to have one such counselor assist as many as 500 students. Many offer a part-time social worker or provide a piecemeal set of affective activities. Others offer nothing at all. Some are attempting to change the climate and focus of their schools by extending the guidance program and redefining the place and purpose of guidance. Others have purchased ready-made curricula for guidance and trained a few teachers to implement the program.

Mac Iver (1990) found that 66 percent of the schools in the Johns Hopkins University Center for Research on Elementary and Middle Schools (CREMS) national survey have one homeroom or group advisory period and 9 percent have two such periods weekly. He found that many schools are developing responsive support systems such as homerooms,

By Sherrel Bergmann

advisory groups, counseling services, and other activities designed to extend the guidance services.

In spite of the large percentage, most principals in this study reported that the traditional activities of taking attendance and making announcements were the main purpose of homerooms. The CREMS study also found that regardless of grade span, schools that have guidance counselors are significantly less likely to have advisory groups or activities. Large schools that serve economically disadvantaged students and urban schools with predominantly minority disadvantaged student populations are most likely to offer advisory programs and guidance support activities.

The need for attention to the guidance requirements of the early adolescent has been recognized since the inception of the junior high and the recognition of the unique needs of this age group. Educators have cited the need for such programs for the past 30 years. For example, Noar (1961) said the responsibility of the school instructional program was to meet the four needs that related to early adolescent's emotions:

1. The need for security and affection, which creates a feeling of being wanted and a sense of belonging.
2. The need for recognition and reward.
3. The need for achievement and success.
4. The need for fun and adventure as new experiences, both educational and recreational.

Alexander (1969), Eichhorn (1966), and other early writers in middle level education identified guidance as a viable and essential part of the middle school curriculum. Meanwhile, the counseling profession was recognizing the need for guidance training for the middle school that was significantly different than that required for the elementary and secondary levels (Stamm and Nissman, 1979).

What seems to be agreed upon by all is that guidance services at the middle level school must be expanded so that every student can have an adult in the building who is his or her advocate, and if possible, programs that focus on self-esteem and the issues related to growing up. Middle level professionals are the first to admit that the guidance needs of today and the future cannot be met by one person in each building. An extended, proactive guidance model must be evident in every building if our students are to survive their own culture, society's early demands upon them, school as a social system, and socialization. What is needed is role clarification for counselors and an extension of existing guidance services by using other adults and positive role models within the community.

In *Guidance in the Middle School: Everyone's Responsibility*, Cole (1981) stated, "A middle school program must include professionally trained counselors who possess skills in working with groups and with parents. They must be well versed in the developmental tasks of the transescent, as well as competent in traditional counseling skills." She listed the four roles of the middle school guidance worker as counseling, consulting, coordinating, and functioning as a specialist in certain areas of the curriculum.

The role of the teacher in the guidance program is more direct in the middle school. While all teachers are expected to be front-line listeners and facilitators, middle school teachers have a more direct role through advisory, home base, and other structures. Teachers actually do much more informal counseling than they realize. They are the first to notice changes in attitude, behavior, or achievement.

Teachers who assume extended guidance roles may require additional training and support. Teacher education programs have been void of courses or training in affective

education and guidance; they need training in listening skills, basic human relations, what to do about tough topics, where to refer serious problems, cultural diversity, conflict resolution, and group dynamics. They must have the capacity to offer more than content in their classrooms.

A comprehensive middle level guidance program requires extensive planning and attention to the needs of both adults and students. It cannot rely on one person to meet the guidance needs of all early adolescents.

Essential Elements of an Extended Guidance Program

The following elements are necessary to ensure that the "compassion component" of the middle level school is in place:

1. Caring adults must be present as role models for the students.

All adults who interact with early adolescents must realize the impact they may have in a very brief period of time. Many early adolescents learn how to treat others by watching the adults at home and at school.

The role of the teacher as significant role model cannot be underestimated. Students also relate to high school students, who can serve as peer counselors, and to community persons who may become mentors. Every student has the right to at least one adult who knows him or her in the school setting.

2. If possible, a consistent peer group should meet regularly.

This peer group should serve as a protected forum for discussion of school issues affecting students. Some schools have established advisory programs that meet daily. Others meet several times a week. The nature and purpose of these programs are as various as the schools that have them, but the attempt is to offer the continuity that the students need.

Schools must not assume, however, that an advisory program is enough to meet the guidance needs of all students. It may be a good start, but other elements are necessary. Advisory may be the catalyst for implementing guidance issues and activities throughout the entire curriculum.

The research on advisory programs (Mac Iver, 1990; Putbrese, 1989; Gill and Read, 1990) indicates that where there are well-established programs, both students and teachers benefit. Girls appear to benefit more than boys according to Putbrese, and potential dropouts may be kept in school because of the program, according to Mac Iver.

One of the strongest pleas for some kind of consistent adult involvement comes from interviews of 220 at-risk students in middle schools, where 65 percent stated that they really needed an adult to listen to them and understand them (Bergmann, 1989).

3. Community service projects should involve students as individuals and in groups.

Whether community service is seen as a guidance project or a separate part of the curriculum, what the students learn from the experience is compassion, self-worth, and a new set of skills. The Carnegie Report, *Turning Points; Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century* (1989), stresses the use of community service projects as one of the essential elements of the middle school.

Many middle schools that have advisory programs offer community service options as a part of the advisory. One school had as its goal to increase the altruistic nature of its

students via its advisory program.

The school social worker contacted the local county social service office to see if there were projects that were appropriate for early adolescents. Thirty-three agencies responded and offered to participate in a helper's fair in the school gym.

Each advisory group "shopped for its project" by listening to brief descriptions of what help was needed. Each group then adopted an agency for the year. There were projects ranging from food baskets for needy families for the holidays to the group that secretly adopted the teachers. Others wrote letters for elderly nursing home residents, made bird feeders and raised money to buy seed for the winter, worked in local animal shelters, helped in the nearby elementary school and day care center, helped with Meals on Wheels, and made toys for tots.

Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Washington, D.C., Detroit, and Atlanta have all adopted mandatory community service.

4. *Student decision making should be encouraged and taught.*

One of the most common goals of guidance programs is to help students become effective decisionmakers. Unfortunately, early adolescents don't realize that decision making requires a set of skills that become more sophisticated with use. Many skip from problem, to emotion, to action without gathering information or seeking alternatives.

Extended guidance means that students are involved in decision making in all phases of their schooling: curriculum choices, grading, co-curricular activities, and social interactions. Too many adults today are afraid to let students make decisions. Without practice and the realization of consequences, students will probably not learn to make good decisions (Bergmann and Rudman, 1985).

5. *A CARE (Concerned About Reaching Everyone) team should be established.*

This effective extended guidance activity is in place in many middle schools. Ideally, the CARE team is a group of teachers who meet on a monthly basis for the purpose of assessing the current student culture in the school. Other purposes include identification of at-risk students, advisory planning, or planned interaction of teachers and counselors.

What is most essential in this process is that groups of teachers meet across grade levels to discuss students. While individual teams can discuss the students on their team, it is necessary to get a picture of what life in the sixth grade is like, or how new students are acclimating to school. If a middle school cannot establish a full advisory program or expand the number of counselors, it can begin with the CARE team concept to ensure that no students fall through the cracks.

6. *A wellness program for students and teachers should be provided.*

With so much emphasis on illness in our society, some middle schools have chosen to provide programs for the entire school community on how to keep body and mind healthy. Some examples from various middle schools in Wisconsin include snack breaks, aerobics conditioning for students and teachers, self-esteem lectures, and self-improvement projects for teachers and students.

7. *Age-appropriate social activities should be provided.*

We must stop forcing sixth grade students to try to behave like 16-year-olds. We have historically done this by offering social activities that emulate those of the high school. It is unrealistic to expect that a student who is embarrassed to open his locker in front of his

peers will have the social maturity to ask a girl to the sixth grade sock hop.

One of the most common guidance crises in the middle school is the harm done by any activity that requires try-outs where many try and few are selected. Cheerleading, sports activities, dramatic productions, and other selective activities do harm to the self-esteem of more students than they are worth. If one of the goals of the middle level school is to ensure success for all students (*Turning Points*, 1989), then extended guidance means removing activities that set students up for failure.

It also means providing opportunities for students to be successful. Many middle level schools have the students plan their social activities through their advisory programs. Students must formally plan to socialize because the informal times to do so (such as recess) have vanished from the schedule in most middle level schools. The teacher adviser can be sure that the planning is realistic and age-appropriate.

8. At-risk students should be identified early.

These are not necessarily the same students who are receiving special services. One of the easiest ways to identify potential guidance needs is to have each teacher submit the name of one student they are concerned about, along with the reason for their concern. When a list has been compiled, all adults in the building can be asked to check on those students.

In many middle schools this process has been formalized into a mentorship program. Frequently, those students who cause the most trouble are not at the highest risk (Bergmann, 1989).

9. All students should be surveyed often.

The most effective way to learn about the guidance needs of early adolescents is to ask them. Surveys can be done by teams or by individual teachers. Counselors can interview students, or students can conduct interviews.

Questions such as, "What is the best thing about our school?" will provide good feedback. Questions such as, "What would you change about our school?" will provide essential feedback.

10. The guidance curriculum should be based on student needs.

If a school is going to formalize the guidance program, there must be input from teachers, counselors, students, parents, and community representatives. Too often, adults decide what they think students need and design or purchase guidance programs based on those perceptions.

We must accurately identify the needs of this year's group of students before we can determine what types of activities and experiences would be most appropriate. When the student needs have been assessed, suggested activities, plus designated responsibilities should be outlined.

All advisory programs should have a written curriculum outline. There must be a singleness of purpose for the program and its outcomes.

One of the oldest and most widely emulated advisory programs in the country is Prime Time, from Sarasota County, Fla. This program has a very sophisticated set of curriculum guides that are designed and evaluated by teachers and students. Prime Time also includes a significant staff development component (Myrick, Highland, and Highland, 1986).

When a curriculum is written for guidance activities, it carries with it the significance of being a regular part of the school day. It means school officials have made a

commitment to including guidance for every student, not just those who are in trouble.

While many middle level schools have made progress toward the expansion of guidance services, too many schools still rely on one person to do all of these activities.

Typical early adolescents do not wait until they can see the counselor to deal with their crises. Many seek an understanding adult who will listen to them and perhaps help them think through their future action. Others decide by group vote or action and live with the fear of peer rejection should they not comply.

Middle level educators can decide to be proactive and give these students the extended guidance skills and services they need, or we can continue to use the first-aid approach to counseling. Students should not have to face a serious problem to get adult attention in the middle level school.

We have made significant progress, but we must decide how compassionate we wish to be, and in turn, our students to become. No one single guidance professional or program can meet the needs of all students.

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Leadership at the Middle Level

Effectiveness is a routine measure of the quality of public schools in this nation. On the surface this would seem to be appropriate. The dilemma is that there is no commonly accepted definition of the term "effective." It is often used indiscriminately and reflects the degree to which one is satisfied or dissatisfied with the current operation of the school(s).

In June 1989, the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development issued its definitive report on the status of education at the middle level, *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century*. The report provoked a renewed examination of educational practices at the middle level.

This chapter will focus on the practices that contribute to the effectiveness of administrators at the middle level. It will describe the multiple roles assumed by the middle level administrator and address the skills needed to ensure success.

The concept of effectiveness is complex at best. A review of the literature provides varied perspectives on the concept and allows one to accept or refute many different criteria of effectiveness. However, one measure that seems to surface in all the literature is the role of the administrator. The more effective schools are led by an administrative team that provides a good balance between management and instructional skills.

In a comprehensive review of the literature, Johnston and Markle (1986) identified the principal "as a strong performer in achieving educational excellence." Given the importance of this leadership role, the attributes of the effective middle level administrator are critical to the overall success of the educational program.

Multiple Roles

Any administrative role is multifaceted. However, the role of the middle level administrator is perhaps more complex than that of any other level. Among the roles assumed by the administrator are instructional leader, student and staff developer, planner and change agent, and parent developer.

Lounsbury (1983) described the leadership role this way: "The leadership job required at the middle level is often not to do, but to undo; not to add, but to subtract; not to organize, but to reduce organization."

By Ron Williamson

Administrator as Inspirational Leader

Perhaps the most important function of the middle level administrator is to possess and demonstrate a clear educational philosophy. Such a vision must be evident in every aspect of the job. Verbal and nonverbal communication must reflect this philosophy.

The effective administrator will not only have a vision but will actively work to promote and implement the philosophy. The administrator is often the one common link between students, staff, and parents. The importance of having and maintaining a clear educational philosophy cannot be understated.

Administrator as Human Resource Developer

An equally important role for the middle level administrator is that of human resource developer. The process of education is one of intense human interaction. Students, staff members, and parents all fill various roles that contribute to a child's education.

The school administrator works with each group to create an increased awareness of the school program, an acceptance of the school's mission, and an understanding of the variables that account for school effectiveness. The ability to bring out the best in each group and to establish a common link is a key to effective leadership.

For example, the administrator must be able to establish and maintain relationships with students. However, the effective administrator moves beyond the role of disciplinarian and accepts the more demanding role of friend, advocate, establisher of norms, and role model. Middle level students thrive on guidance and support. The middle level administrator can serve as a significant, caring adult for many students.

One of the most important aspects of developing human resources is the middle level administrator's work with the teaching staff. When administrators work closely with teachers on instruction, both teachers and administrators are more satisfied with their jobs.

Administrators address instructional improvement by observing or participating in classroom instruction, communicating expectations clearly to teachers, working with staff members to make decisions about the instructional program, and having and communicating high expectations for the instructional program. Enhancing teaching and learning, possessing a knowledge of instructional techniques, refining teacher supervision skills, and ensuring adequate resources for the teaching staff are attributes of effective instructional leaders. Acquiring and enhancing these attributes is an indicator of the effective middle level administrator.

Assisting parents is another important role of the middle level administrator. Parents routinely describe the difficulties of their own middle years. Based upon their own experience, parents approach the middle years for their children with some fear and anxiety, and often with reduced confidence in their abilities as parents.

The effective middle level administrator has the skills to assist parents in identifying skills and strategies that may be effective with their youngsters. The administrator readily provides opportunities for parents to enhance their parenting skills. This often takes the form of holding parent workshops focused on understanding adolescence, establishing support groups for parents, or engaging in problem-solving sessions with individual parents or groups of parents. As with students, the effective middle level administrator constantly strives to bring out the best in parents.

The third key constituent group is the school staff. The effective administrator will expend considerable energy with this group. The teaching staff's daily contact with youngsters makes them a critical variable in school effectiveness. The administrator works with the teaching staff to ensure that their actions articulate the shared vision for the school, that they have an understanding of the middle level student, that they

approach instruction with flexibility, and that they exhibit a desire for professional growth through staff development.

Johnston and Markle (1986) state that, "The behavior of the principal (toward teachers, students, parents, etc.) sets the 'norm' for the building."

Lounsbury (1983) puts it this way, "The principal is just as much a model to the faculty as the teacher is to students. In short, principals should treat teachers as they would have them treat students—a sort of golden rule for administrators."

Administrato. as Change Agent

A critical feature of any effective middle level program is its ability to be flexible and to adapt to meet the changing needs of middle level students. This feature accounts for the third role of the middle level administrator, that of planner and change agent. This aspect of the administrative role requires a sensitivity to the needs of constituents (students, staff, and parents) as they plan and implement programs.

Maslow described human needs as falling into a hierarchy. The higher needs, such as self-esteem and the need for knowledge, arise only after the lower needs, such as food and safety, have been met. If a lower need conflicts with a higher one of equal strength, the lower one will prevail. Maslow's hierarchy can be applied to the process of school change.

In general, participants in the change process will be unable to focus their energy on higher order needs, such as curriculum development, until the lower needs—such as their teaching assignment, or safety for their youngsters—are met.

For each constituent group, the focus must be on helping members of the group move through the change process. Anticipating their concerns, developing a timeline for addressing the concerns, and maintaining a sensitivity to the anxiety produced by change are critical attributes of the effective middle level administrator.

However, sensitivity to the needs of the constituent groups cannot deter the middle level administrator from maintaining a focus on school improvement, on serving middle level students, and on addressing the many instructional issues critical to the success of the program.

Skills for Success

The role of the middle level administrator is extremely complex. Success in this role requires that the administrator possess a variety of skills: an understanding and appreciation of the middle level student, a knowledge of effective middle level practices, a tolerance for ambiguity, a bias toward risk taking, a willingness to monitor and adjust, an ability to make decisions, a wealth of human relations skills, and an ability to manage the day-to-day operations of a school.

- *Understanding Middle Level Students*

Effective middle level administrators understand and appreciate the characteristics of middle level students. They are sensitive to the physical, social, emotional, and intellectual changes that take place during the middle years.

They understand that it is inappropriate to make generalizations about middle level students: Students in any given classroom will display a range of developmental characteristics. The more physically advanced students may not have matured socially, while the more intellectually advanced students may not have matured emotionally.

Understanding the nature of the early adolescent is the foundation on which success at the middle level is built.

- *Knowing About Effective Practices*

An equally important skill for middle level administrators is a knowledge of effective middle level practices. The successful administrator will be familiar with the wealth of literature about what works. An ability to describe and articulate the rationale for such practices as interdisciplinary teaching, the advisory concept, the lessening of competition through intramural sports programs, heterogeneous grouping practices, and the flexible use of time are critical.

The effective administrator is one who constantly strives to improve the educational program and better serve students. This administrator understands that, as students change, so must the practices common to the middle level school. Effective administrators set the standard for staff development by engaging in professional reading, attending conferences and other professional development activities, and by remaining current with the latest curricular and instructional developments. They model professional growth and responsiveness to the needs of students.

- *Solving Problems*

Effective middle level administrators are not content with set approaches and proven practices. They understand that middle level students do not all conform to one standard and that in serving such students it is imperative that schools engage in some risk taking. This bias toward action is often the difference between success and true excellence at the middle level. Effective administrators will not be denied in the pursuit of serving students.

- *Tolerating Ambiguity*

Middle level students are changeable. Their interests and abilities vary from day to day. In addition, middle level teachers often reflect the characteristics of the students they serve.

The effective middle level administrator is one who can tolerate day-to-day distractions, and who—like the needle on a compass—will swing from side to side but consistently return to point in the direction of the vision and mission of the school. The effective middle level administrator maintains a balance of vision, an appreciation for the process of meaningful change, and a sensitivity to the needs of students and staff.

- *Monitoring and Adjusting*

As with the tolerance for ambiguity, the middle level administrator must be comfortable with the concept of evolutionary program development. Knowledge of effective practices and implementation of those practices are two distinct phases in program improvement.

Administrators and staff are often able to understand and articulate the components of an effective middle level program. The application of those components to the local setting may not be so easily accomplished, however.

For example, interdisciplinary teaching can take many different forms. A teaching staff may be organized into teams of teachers sharing a group of students, a block of time, and a common schedule. However, this reorganization by itself does not ensure that staff members will modify their teaching practices. Only when the team begins to integrate the curriculum, routinely modify their teaching schedules, develop common practices, and build a sense of identity is the full potential of teaming realized.

The effective administrator understands that this development will take place over time, and that various staff members will approach projects with varying degrees of enthusiasm. Meaningful change requires time, staff development, and a willingness to monitor current practices and adjust them toward increased effectiveness.

- *Making Decisions*

Effectiveness at the middle level requires the ability to resolve issues and make decisions. Traditionally, the administrator could be described as one who makes decisions in a timely fashion based upon the information at hand. However, the effective middle level administrator facilitates the decision-making process rather than making all decisions.

Decision making at the middle level requires an understanding of many different models and approaches. An ability to model for teachers a collaborative approach to decision making will not only result in an improved school climate but also will allow the staff to experience the style of decision making that is needed for a successful teaching team, or in working with students. This ability to model alternative decision-making practices is an attribute of effective middle level administrators.

- *Bringing Out the Best in People*

The successful administrator must be able to work with and bring out the best in students, staff members, and parents. Strong, effective human relations skills are essential.

Perhaps the most important of these human relations skills is the ability to communicate effectively. Communication both within the school and to other constituencies, such as central office staff and community members, is essential. Effective administrators articulate the school's mission, are open to and listen to divergent points of view, and are sensitive to the need for all school constituencies to feel valued.

- *Dealing with the Day-to-Day Routine*

Effective middle level administrators possess the skills to balance the day-to-day operation of the school with the need to plan for program refinement and engage in staff development. These include knowledge of scheduling, building maintenance, budgeting, student supervision, and cocurricular programs.

The Evolving Administrative Role

As we move toward the next century, the role of the middle level administrator will continue to change. Demographers such as Harold Hodgkinson indicate that the very fabric of our social and economic order is being modified, and such changes call for refinement of our educational programs.

Administrators must prepare to face this future. The effective middle level administrator will develop the skills to address issues and create a school climate accepting of change and open to new and divergent practices.

Three areas of focus are imperative:

- Administrators must develop the skills necessary to work in this new setting. The changing American family; the increasing expectations for a participative, collaborative approach to leadership; and the renewed interest in alternative educational programs all demand refined approaches to leadership.
- Administrators must build links to the community. The Carnegie Council described this as "connecting schools with communities." The report encouraged schools to work with the community to "marshal its resources behind the schools." Finding the human and financial resources within a community and linking them in meaningful ways with the schools will be a critical attribute of school leadership.
- Administrators must maintain a clear vision of the role of the middle level school.

Conclusion

Middle level schools are distinct. Their very name defines the issue: they are in the middle. The students they serve are neither elementary nor high school students; however, certification requirements imply that the staff may be either elementary or secondary. The expectation of parents often is that the schools treat their children with the sensitivity of the elementary school and the rigor of the high school.

Each of these descriptors points to the often contradictory issues with which middle level administrators must deal. Critical to the effectiveness of these administrators is the ability to manage multiple roles, apply varied skills, and be sensitive to the ever-changing nature of the middle level student and the schools they serve.

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Middle Level Transition

Transition is a term that is often used to describe the different phases of middle level education. It also is used to identify the process of changing the grade structure of a middle level school. In addition, it sometimes is used to refer to program changes. Most often, however, as in this chapter, transition refers to the movement of students into and out of the middle level school and the planned programs that help to make this process effective.

When students move from elementary schools to middle level schools, and from middle level schools to high schools, change is imminent. Students must be able to cope with adjustments to new schools, programs, expectations, teachers, and peers. Most students readily adjust to these changes. However, in order to ensure that students are effectively assimilated into the new situations, it is imperative that well-planned transition programs be provided.

Since the middle level school is the agency that receives and sends students, it is essential that the primary responsibility for the initiation of planning activities be assumed by the middle level staff. The principal must take the leadership role in planning and developing transition strategies.

Brazee (1987) describes the elements of planning a successful transition program:

- First, it is extremely important to establish purpose.
- Second, school officials must determine responsibilities for the various tasks that must be completed. Specific assignments may be assumed by the principal, while others may be delegated to teachers and counselors.
- Third, transition strategies must be thoroughly planned.
- Fourth, programs must be developed in accordance with the established purposes of transition.

Middle level education is often thought of as the bridge between the elementary school and the high school. However, it is becoming more apparent that middle level schools must establish a separate identity—neither elementary nor high school—that is founded on a well-defined mission statement. Middle level education is more than a bridge. Schools in the middle must provide an educational program appropriate for the early adolescent, one that is based on their unique needs and characteristics. Therein lies the purpose and number one priority of middle level schools.

By Larry Roth

Although three separate levels of education exist in most districts, total educational effectiveness is best served when elementary, middle, and high school programs are bridged together. The middle level school provides the binding link. These thoughts must be taken into consideration when planning and developing a transition program that supports movement into and out of the middle level school.

In a national survey conducted by the Johns Hopkins University Center for Research on Elementary and Middle Schools (Epstein and Mac Iver, 1990), it was noted that the schools surveyed provide 4.5 articulation activities for students moving into the middle level, and 3.9 activities for those entering high school.

The three most common transition activities into the middle level were: having elementary students visit the middle grade school; having the administrators of middle grade and elementary schools meet to discuss programs; and having middle-grade counselors meet with elementary counselors or staff members.

Similar activities were found to be most popular in the transition of students to the high school. Several purposes for transition articulation activities were described by Epstein and Mac Iver (1990). They include:

- To assure that children and families are better informed about the school programs, requirements, procedures, opportunities, and about students' and parents' responsibilities at the new level of schooling.
- To assure that children are better prepared for the curricular and social demands at the new level of schooling.
- To assure that middle grades educators are better informed of the connections between their programs and those of the elementary schools that their children come from, and those of the high schools that their students will attend; and to help elementary and high school educators understand their connections with the middle grades.
- To assure that middle grades educators are better prepared to help students adjust to and succeed in a new school environment. (p. 23)

The importance of and need for well-planned transition activities have been clearly stated by the NASSP Council on Middle Level Education (1985):

> One of the main responsibilities of the middle level school is to assure the smooth transition for students from elementary school to high school. Most school systems maintain three distinct, autonomous, and separate units that do little to coordinate their activities, programs, or curricula. The coordination that exists usually results from informal agreements and conversations between and among principals; it rarely stems from planned efforts to integrate the schools' programs across all grade levels.
>
> To assure that the transition function is fulfilled: Schools should create a transition panel, composed of elementary, secondary, and middle level school teachers and parents. Panel members should discuss practices that interfere with smooth transition from one level to another, identify ways to facilitate this transition, and recommend to the schools or the board of education methods for fully integrating and articulating the K-12 programs in the district. (p. 17)

The National Middle School Association's publication, *This We Believe* (1982), also emphasizes the need for well-planned transition programs.

> Discontinuities in learning are especially evident when students transfer from one educational setting to another, such as from elementary to middle school or middle school to high school.

Therefore, curriculum, guidance programs, social activities, and other aspects of education should be carefully articulated K-12. Transescents, already highly sensitive and vulnerable because of the many changes they are experiencing personally, are especially likely to be upset by a shift from one school to another and should receive special consideration at the transition points. Staff members of affected schools must plan together and keep in touch concerning student progress, and resist the temptation to blame students' previous teachers for any inadequacies. (pp. 13-14)

The Foundation of Transition in a Middle School

Adams Middle School is located in North Platte, Nebr. This 6-8 middle school provides a unique educational program for approximately 750 students. The staff, parents, and students were involved extensively from 1983 to 1987 in planning for the transition from a 7-9 junior high to the new middle school. A number of changes occurred when the move was made, as outlined in the figure.

The basic concepts that undergirded all planning and developing were:

1. Adhere to the essential elements of middle level education.
2. Use accepted middle school concepts and philosophies that emphasize the needs of early adolescents.
3. Include a strong foundation in basic academic areas, with emphasis on articulation.
4. Promote increased student exposure to a variety of new experiences.
5. Develop an athletic/activity program that emphasizes broad participation, teamwork, physical development, and basic skills.
6. Provide a school environment that fosters positive emotional growth and development.

Adams staff members, students, and parents were assigned to seven different study committees, which were directed by a steering committee composed of representatives from each group. A brief overview of the program that was developed and then implemented in 1987-88 follows:

- Interdisciplinary Team Planning
  - Two teams for each grade (115 students)
  - Block scheduling
  - Team classrooms are blocked together
  - Teachers have common planning time

Junior High School	**to**	**Middle School**
Content Driven		Affective and Content Driven
Teacher-Centered		Client-Centered
Departmentalized		Interdisciplinary Teams
Required/Elective Courses		Basics/Exploratory Courses
Grades 7-9		Grades 6-8
Preparation for High School		Transition School
		Adviser Program

- Exploratory Program
  - 32 exploratory courses
  - Six to nine weeks in length
  - Broad exposure
  - Specific guidelines in grading, testing, homework, etc.
- Adviser/Advisee—Reach
  - Teacher/student interaction
  - Home base
  - Monthly themes/positive school climate
  - Recreational reading
- Study Skills
  - 29 study skills units, taught to entry level students as part of academic block
- Grading
  - Differentiate between exploratory and academic
- Athletics/Activities
  - Intramural
  - Broad participation/no-cut policy
  - Learning activities in high-interest areas
  - Available to all students

The Adams educational program, as briefly described, is the basis for and gives meaning to the transition program that facilitates movement into and out of the middle school. Transition activities have been carefully planned and developed by a transition committee composed of Adams counselors, high school counselors, and representatives from the sending and receiving schools.

Three basic premises guided the development of transition activities.

- The middle school program is responsive to the needs and characteristics of early adolescents.
- The transition program is a reflection of the educational program.
- Transition is a continuous process.

Adams Middle School Transition Activities

A number of transition activities are employed to help students succeed in their new school. The target audience for the activities is primarily parents and students. Parents are often apprehensive about their child's move to a new school, and a great deal of the transition program focuses on parent involvement. Following are descriptions of the transition activities designed to facilitate movement into and out of the middle school.

Transition In

- *Spring visit/registration.* Adams counselors visit the fifth grade classes of six feeder schools. Parents are invited to these sessions. The sixth grade program is thoroughly explained. When possible, a sixth grade teacher teams with the counselors and explains the program and structure.

Students are registered during these sessions, and the last part of the meeting is used

for questions and answers.

• *Parent information night.* A parent information night is scheduled in May. Personal invitations are mailed to all parents of fifth grade students. Parents are encouraged to bring their child who will be moving into the sixth grade.

The program includes presentations by staff members on attendance and behavior, interdisciplinary teams, exploratory courses, the adviser program (Reach), the music program, and intramurals. In addition, the parent chairperson of the Reach Parent Sponsor Program gives a presentation on parent involvement and encourages parents to volunteer. Presentations are concluded with a brief talk from a sixth grade parent. The one-hour program ends with a question-and-answer session.

• *Summer Newsletter.* A summer newsletter containing additional information on the middle school, along with special instructions, is mailed to all new sixth grade parents. In addition, the newsletter provides articles on needed school materials and opening day procedures and schedules.

• *Pre-school orientation.* Parents and students are invited to an orientation session one week prior to the start of school. Student schedules are explained at this time, and students are familiarized with the building. After the half-hour session, students go through an abbreviated version of their class schedule, consisting of 12-minute periods. This provides students with an opportunity to become familiar with the building and to get acquainted with their teachers.

• *Sixth grade student/parent guide.* A special handbook has been developed and is given to all sixth grade parents. The purpose of the guide is to make the transition to middle school easier and more comfortable. Topics that are covered in the handbook include:

Why is a middle school unique?
What makes a middle level student unique?
What is a middle school?
What are the needs of middle level students?
Is my sixth grader ready for this?
How is the school program designed to meet the needs of students?
What does your child's school expect from parents?
How can you help your child with homework?
What's a school counselor?

The counselors encourage parents to call them if they have any questions or concerns related to the handbook.

Ongoing Transition

As stated earlier, a basic belief of Adams Middle School is that transition is a continuous process. Many of the middle level educational programs that have been implemented support this belief. They include:

• *Adviser-advisee program (Reach).* All students are assigned to a Reach room with a staff adviser. The Reach adviser acts as an advocate and friend of the student. Reach has many purposes, which include: monitoring of behavior and performance, providing activities, socialization, creating positive relationships, addressing concerns, and promoting a positive school climate. The Reach teachers maintain a folder on each

student containing progress reports, grades, and behavior referrals.

• *Interdisciplinary teams (IDTs).* Adams Middle School is divided into six IDTs. The primary purpose of the team structure is to focus on students and to provide the support needed to help them succeed in the educational program. Interdisciplinary teams provide a networking system among teachers, students, counselors, resource teachers, and parents. Students who are experiencing difficulty are closely monitored, and parents are involved in strategies to correct deficiencies.

• *Parent involvement programs.* Many opportunities are provided for parent involvement. More than 100 parents volunteer to be active in the Reach Parent Sponsor Program. One hundred parents are sent personal invitations to attend one of two scheduled coffees each month. Meetings are informal and provide parents with an opportunity to ask questions or express concerns.

Throughout the year, all Adams parents are invited to attend one of the coffees. Special information nights are scheduled periodically. Topics for the presentations may include drugs and alcohol, teenage suicide, the middle school, and characteristics of early adolescents.

• *Parent newsletter.* A parent newsletter is written and mailed to all Adams parents each month. The newsletter contains special information on school events, recognition of students, news from exploratory classes, news from the IDTs, and schedules of coming events. The newsletter serves as an effective bridge between home and school.

Transition Out

It is extremely important for thorough transition planning to be completed to accommodate eighth grade students moving into the high school. Unfortunately, however, less emphasis is placed on developing such activities. This may be due to the age of the students or the perception that the change from middle level to high school is less traumatic and students will need less guidance.

It is necessary to plan for transition out to provide students with the best possible opportunity for success. The programs we have developed include:

• *Visits to the middle school.* One learning activity in an eighth grade exploratory course focuses on transition. All eighth grade students are involved at one time during the school year. During the activity, high school students, counselors, and administrators visit the class to discuss "Life in the High School." This has proved to be a very popular transition activity.

• *School visit/registration.* In the spring, high school counselors work with middle school counselors to schedule conferences with eighth grade students and their parents. During this time, students select courses and are registered for the high school program.

• *Pre-school orientation.* An orientation session is scheduled for students and parents during the week prior to opening day. Routine matters are dealt with, including explaining schedules, lunch procedures, first day instructions, rules, and familiarizing students with the school.

• *Guided tours.* During the entire pre-school week, scheduled guided tours are conducted by students. This activity is provided to acquaint the students with the building. Counselors are available to help students with any concerns and questions.

Conclusion

The key to successful transition programs is thorough planning. The middle level program must be founded on a thorough knowledge of the characteristics and needs of early adolescents and on the essential elements of middle level education.

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How Do You Know That It Works?

"How did it go?" I asked a graduate student just returning to campus after her interview for a first principal's job. "I think it went well," she replied, "everything felt right."

Empirically, she had no evidence at all that it had gone well. In fact, it could be argued that she knew nothing about what happened. The verdict was still out: The interviewers had not evaluated the experience in her presence, she had not been offered the job on the spot, and no formal assessment of her interview performance was reported to her, even after she was offered the job. How, then, did she "know" how it went?

This student used one of the dozen or so ways of knowing that the awesome human mind has cultivated over the millennia, rather than instinct, to respond to its environment. Despite the fact that universities pride themselves in applying rational, orderly thinking to the solution of problems, even in graduate school "everything felt right" is a reasonable way to describe how someone knows an interview went well.

At the same time, we are not likely to have much confidence in a bridge that was built by an engineer who "felt right" about the structure and failed to perform any of the routine calculations we have come to associate with large construction projects. We may, however, have confidence in a family physician who knows us well and "follows a hunch" about a treatment rather than relying strictly on test information.

So it is in schools. When we ask "What works best?" in middle level schools, we also have to follow that question with a second one: "How do you know?"

Some things we know because there is abundant empirical evidence. Some things just feel right, and others we know are beneficial because we have seen them work. In this chapter, I will introduce several ways of knowing that are useful in helping to understand school practices and "what works at the middle level."

Since the early part of the 20th century, an era characterized by a rational-scientific point of view, schools have been expected to produce "evidence" of their performance. Most often, this evidence is expected to take the form of quantitative studies, modeled after those in the laboratory sciences, which are conducted with sufficient rigor and empirical safeguards to ensure that the conclusions are as accurate as is possible in any work with human beings.

By J. Howard Johnston

At the same time, however, educators often have little regard for carefully controlled studies. These studies often control so much of what is normal in a school, that the results are suspect because the controls worked so well. In other words, to study the school with full experimental rigor requires that it be changed in some significant way from its normal state.

Among scientists, other ways of knowing enjoy equally small regard. Intuitions, hunches, feelings, and anecdotes are heresies in the scientific community, but often they are the dominant ways in which people who work in schools and send their children to learn there come to know their school and how it operates. Indeed, volumes of empirical evidence that a practice is effective can be eradicated by a story of a single failure, told by an agitated parent to a sympathetic school board.

The problem is not that one way of knowing is superior to the others, it is that schools are microcosms of normal life. As a result, they recreate all the elements of normal life: thinking, feeling, and acting. No one way of knowing is sufficient for understanding the richness of the school experience, nor is it adequate for making a judgment about how good or bad a school is.

In the rest of this chapter, we will examine several different ways of knowing (Eisner, 1985) and what each one seems to tell us about what works in the middle level schools.

Scientific Ways of Knowing

Scientific ways of knowing are the ones that are most highly prized in the rational-scientific paradigm. They apply the scientific method (observing, hypothesizing, data gathering, concluding) to school-based problems and questions.

This approach values precision in the design of the study, the measurement of the phenomena being studied, and the analysis of the data set. Furthermore, this approach values conservative interpretations of conclusions; researchers are obligated to present their results with a great deal of caution about how far and to whom the results can be generalized and what the limitations are to the study. Because this approach gives the impression of being objective, this way of "knowing" what works is highly valued by researchers and policymakers. Virtually every principal in the land has been asked of a new practice, "What does the research have to say about that?"

From hundreds of scientific and quasi-scientific studies that have been conducted on middle level schools, there are a number of things we can state with some certainty. First is that interdisciplinary teaming works at the middle level, at least as well as other practices, and probably better than most. There is evidence that teaming improves the sense of bonding and commitment that students have toward the school, thereby reducing the likelihood that they will drop out or fail to abide by group norms (Arhar, 1990).

Furthermore, there is increasing evidence that interdisciplinary teaming has beneficial effects on student performance on standardized achievement tests (Arhar, Johnston, and Markle, 1988; 1989). The most compelling evidence for teaming, though, is probably found in the fact that it improves teachers' sense of efficacy and effectiveness. Teachers who work on teams report more satisfaction with teaching, a stronger tendency to remain in the profession, and a greater sense of success with individual students (Arhar, Johnston, and Markle, 1989).

Beyond teaming, we also know that tracking by ability does not benefit anyone very much. Oakes, Slavin, and a host of others have documented in large-scale studies and policy analysis that tracking depresses achievement, creates racially segregated groups of

students, and actually creates subcultures in schools that do not value either school performance or the order that is necessary for learning to occur.

Finally, there is now sufficient empirical evidence that cooperative learning is very successful, particularly for minority and disadvantaged youth. In both basic skills and the learning of higher order concepts and thinking skills, cooperative learning has been demonstrated, fairly consistently, to produce higher engagement rates, more on-task behavior, and higher student performance on tests than most competing forms of instruction.

The list of empirical "truths" about education is considerably longer than this, but these serve to illustrate the point that empirical, rational-scientific evidence is not sufficient to bring about large-scale educational changes. Only about 25 percent of existing middle level schools make use of teaming; nearly 75 percent of all middle level students are still tracked by ability; and cooperative learning accounts for less than 10 percent of all class time for most middle level students.

But if these things are "true," why don't we all race to start doing them? The answer is quite simply that not all of us value equally this particular way of knowing that something is true. Some of us prefer to know things in other ways.

Formal Ways of Knowing

The formal mode of knowing comes from the flawless execution of procedures. In mathematics, for example, if you always employ the same algorithm, you will always get the same result. In a laboratory, if you always mix two ingredients in the same proportion and under the same conditions, the same thing will always happen.

The formal way of knowing is logical, precise, and requires strict adherence to the prescribed procedures. The focus is on the process, not the outcome.

Formal ways of knowing value the application of a procedure, or algorithm, that is believed to always solve the problem: "If you have five apples and eight people, how can you divide them equally?" There is little room for questioning whether to apply the procedure at all, or if some other solution might work better, because in this system the procedure itself is seen to have value quite apart from its outcome. Thus, the middle schooler who suggests that he might borrow three apples from a neighbor or not bring the apples out at all may find himself in trouble.

In schools, the formal way of knowing usually applies to accountability for following procedures, not for outcomes. Such an orientation is usually manifested in following mandated procedures, usually state or district requirements, without much regard for what happens as a result of following them.

In one school, the district policy requires that students pass three marking periods, one of which must be the final quarter, in order to be promoted. Implementing this policy with a certain group of migratory students who often must be absent from school for long periods of time in the spring produced a grade retention rate of almost 50 percent in a single school.

Asked if that was a reasonable outcome, the staff might argue with the question. The question is, they might say, "Are we doing what we are supposed to be doing?"

On the other hand, we know that some things are done in effective middle level schools just because "that's the way we do things around here." We know that it is best for students to enter and withdraw from school in an orderly fashion, not because there is any demonstrated educational benefit, but because order works better than chaos when

dealing with large numbers of people. Therefore, we know that schools that are fundamentally orderly are better than those that are not. The process itself has value.

Interpersonal Ways of Knowing

Interpersonal ways of knowing are those through which you get to know and understand someone (Berscheid, 1985). In essence, there are only two ways to get to know someone: through experience, or by reputation. In schools, interpersonal ways of knowing are among the most powerful in shaping both private experiences with and public opinion of the institution.

To a large degree, the reputation that a school has is the reputation of the people who work in it. If the teachers are seen as happy and open, the school is viewed as a good place to send a child. If the school has a reputation for the oppressive enforcement of petty rules, it will be viewed as a place to be endured.

Obviously, much of a school's reputation comes from the experiences the students and the parents have with that school. Until recently, those experiences affected public perceptions of the school as well.

Now, however, fewer than 20 percent of all U.S. households have children in school. Therefore, most adults no longer have the "child's eye view" of the school that was once so common in community schools. As a result, other sources of information about schools have become very important. And the most important information of all comes from "insiders," those who work in the school.

This means that someone who knows the school secretary, or the custodian, or a teacher, is likely to rely on that individual for information about the way things are in the building.

The residual effects of this kind of knowledge are very strong. Once someone believes that they have inside information, other information about the school, such as that which is disseminated by the district, is distrusted and may even be seen as intentionally misleading. As a result, the credibility the school has with the community is diminished further.

Schools must make sure that they do not send mixed messages, or to produce and disseminate contradictory knowledge about their activities. This means that all members of the school staff and community must have access to the same information, be apprised of its meaning, and be encouraged to share what they know about the school. To do otherwise is to set up conditions in which too many people know with great certainty too many contradictory things about the school.

Intuitional Ways of Knowing

Intuitional knowledge deals with the creation and remembering of images and the feelings that are associated with those images. This way of knowing is extraordinarily powerful in coming to understand any institution.

Few of us who have read or viewed any of the accounts of the Nazi Holocaust can shake the gruesome and terrifying images of the death camps. The hollow faces staring from behind the wire are etched in our collective cultural memories. Now, when we hear about victims of contemporary campaigns of terror anywhere in the world, we conjure up our images of the Holocaust. That intuitive understanding of the new situation heightens our revulsion, even if we do not understand all the details of the current atrocity.

On the other hand, most of us have childhood memories of the sights and smells of a home at holiday times. Those, too, were stored with feelings; most often warm and comforting ones. Now, something as ephemeral as the smell of a particular spice, or a scrap of fabric that recalls a favorite doll, can bring back a rush of feelings.

In schools, intuitional knowledge is very potent. Every person's own school experiences are stored, and these experiences shape their attitudes toward schools in general. For example, if a parent, as a child, was often scolded by teachers, she is likely to recall those feelings of anger and frustration if a conversation with her own child's teacher takes on a scolding tone. After all, she "knows" what these teachers are like; they are obviously treating her daughter just the way they treated her.

In schools, doing some things because they "feel right" to the staff, the students, and the parents is good policy. There is some empirical evidence that advisory programs work to promote good student-teacher relations, but well-run advisory programs just "feel right," too.

They feel like the relationship with the special teacher that so many of us had and that shaped our lives. They make us, as parents, feel that the school is making a powerful effort to overcome the anonymity of modern life and ensure that our children have someone special they can count on. That feeling is more convincing to the public than a room full of empirical data on student self-esteem and mentoring relationships.

Putting Knowledge to Work

Educators must think about their practices in terms of all the ways of knowing. If asked to explain how we know something is good for the middle level school, we must determine, first, if the kind of knowledge that we are being asked for is empirical data on large scale effects, or simply reassurance from someone the community knows and trusts.

It is important that educators cultivate in their publics *all* the ways of knowing what it is they do. That requires that we work hard to build trust, for no amount of data will overcome parent or public distrust of the institution that is providing it.

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Epilog

If you don't know the whence, how can you ever expect to know the whither?" was a favorite question of an elderly gentleman who frequented the same used-book store I did in my undergraduate days. He was, of course, referring to the destiny of humankind in the broadest possible sense. Since that time, I have applied the same question to a number of more specific topics, one of which has been middle level education. The origin of a person or a thing plays a major role in determining the ultimate destination or achievement. Middle level education is no exception.

The authors of this volume have given us a succinct overview of the "whence" from which middle level education came, as well as the why. They also have described where we find ourselves in many areas of middle level education. And, they have issued the challenges we must accept if our "whither" is to result in the best educational experiences for young adolescents.

It seems safe to say that middle level education has arrived, at least in the sense that it no longer needs to defend its existence or purpose. That is not to say, however, that there is not much more to do and much farther to go.

Some common themes that run through these articles echo age-old truths for all levels, but especially the middle level. Chief among these is the recurring call for every child to be known well by at least one adult in the school. This was first forcefully enunciated for me in graduate school 40 years ago by my professor, Ruth Strang.

Recently, in preparation for remarks I was scheduled to make to a group of high school administrators and teachers on the Carnegie Report, *Turning Points*, I asked Fred Hechinger, former education editor for the *New York Times* and a member of the Council that prepared the report, what there was in that report that high school people need to know.

He responded, "The same thing middle level people need to know . . . every child must be known well by at least one adult!"

Middle level schools provide mechanisms for making this possible. If we use these mechanisms wisely and caringly, and attain this goal, the "whence" of the level—and of the boys and girls it serves—will be significantly enhanced.

Whither are we going in middle level education? I am convinced that the next decade will be the "Decade of the Curriculum at the Middle Level." Content will continue to be revised and updated, as always, but the way in which it is organized and delivered will demand and receive our greatest attention and efforts.

In addition, I further believe that specific collegiate preparation for middle level teaching and leadership will become the norm for those who will staff the middle level schools of the next century. There is a great deal of catching up to do, and it will be done.

We've had a marvelous, if sometimes uneven, past. These authors have helped us understand our whence—our "now"—and have presented us with the challenges for the future—our "whither."

A major challenge we face, and one this volume will help us address, is the need for significant improvements in middle level and high school cooperative planning, so that the goals of middle level education and the expectations of the high school can be addressed and accomplished in the best interest of the youth we both serve.

There is no greater challenge before us!

George E. Melton

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